



## Ombudsman's Foreword

It is a privilege to present the 2015-16 Annual Report of the Western Australian Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is an independent, impartial statutory officer who reports directly to the Western Australian Parliament.

The office of the Ombudsman (**the Office**) has four principal functions, which are to:

- Receive, investigate and resolve complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities;
- Review certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities;
- Improve public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations and education and liaison programs with public authorities; and
- Undertake a range of additional functions, including statutory inspection and monitoring functions.



The Ombudsman also concurrently holds the roles of Energy and Water Ombudsman and Chairman, State Records Commission.

Timely and efficient resolution of complaints is a critical role for the Office. During 2015-16, the continuation of our major complaint handling improvement program, introduced in 2007, resulted in 95 per cent of complaints being finalised within three months. Overall, since June 2007, the average age of complaints has reduced from 173 days to 27 days. Over the same period, the cost of handling complaints has reduced by 36 per cent.

This year, we continued to undertake important work in relation to our child death and family and domestic violence fatality review roles and have expanded our reporting of our work on these vital functions in this Annual Report.

Importantly, in November 2015, we tabled in Parliament the report of a major own motion investigation, *Investigation into issues associated with violence restraining orders and their relationship with family and domestic violence fatalities*, that contained 54 recommendations to four government agencies about ways to prevent or reduce family and domestic violence fatalities. In 2015-16, we have undertaken work on a report on the implementation of the 54 recommendations arising from the findings of the investigation. The report will be tabled in Parliament in November 2016. The Office also undertook significant work on a major own motion investigation into ways to prevent or reduce child deaths by drowning. The report of this major investigation will be tabled in Parliament in 2016-17.

The Office also has an important role to undertake a range of statutory inspection, monitoring and reporting functions, including the inspection of telecommunication interception records and the Ombudsman's monitoring functions under the *Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012*.

This year, significant work has been undertaken on the Office's function to monitor the Infringement Notices provisions of *The Criminal Code*. The Office's role is to keep under scrutiny the operation of these provisions for a period of 12 months, prepare a report on the Office's work and activities and furnish a copy of the report to the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police. The scrutiny is to include a review of the impact of the operation of the provisions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Office is undertaking a range of work as part of this monitoring role, including, critically, a wide range of consultative activities. An important part of these activities in 2015-16 was that we consulted members of the community who have experience with the operation of Criminal Code infringement notices. In particular, we have consulted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The report on our work and activities will be completed in 2016-17.

In 2007-08, we introduced a new program aimed at significantly enhancing awareness of, and accessibility to, the Office for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians. The program continued this year with visits to the Indian Ocean Territories, the Pilbara and the Kimberley.

In addition, in 2015-16, we enhanced awareness and access to the Office for children and young people through a range of mechanisms, including a new visiting program to vulnerable groups of children in the child protection system, a new youth space on our website and youth-friendly publications.

The work of the Office is a product of a highly dedicated and hard-working team. I take this opportunity to thank each member of my staff team for their outstanding work during the year.



Chris Field  
**Western Australian Ombudsman**

